

*edience to Divine Rule, the Means of preserving and
promoting Brotherly Love in a Christian Church.*

A

S E R M O N

ON MAT. xviii. 15—18.

Delivered at CHELMSFORD,

SEPTEMBER 7th, 1784.

AT A

M E E T I N G

OF THE

ASSOCIATED PROTESTANT DISSENTING MINISTERS,
IN ESSEX.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

BY SAMUEL ANDREWS.

"Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him
reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break
my head."

L O N D O N:
PRINTED AT THE LITHOGRAPHIC PRESS,
AND SOLD BY
CHARLES DILLEY, IN THE POULTRY,
M,DCC,LXXXV.

...to the ... of ... and ...

S E R M O N

ON MAT. XVII. 12-13.

Delivered at CHILMSTORD.

SEPTEMBER 27, 1784.

M E T I N G



ASSOCIATED PROTESTANT MINISTERS

PUBLISHED BY WARD

BY SAMUEL ANDREWS.

...in ... it shall be a ... and ...

PRINTED AT THE ...
AND SOLD BY
CHARLES DILLY, IN THE FOREST.
MDCCLXXXV.

TO THE BODY OF
PROTESTANT DISSENTING MINISTERS

Associated in the County of ESSEX,

This plain Discourse,

Drawn into public View, by a request, entirely unexpected,

Is now, very respectfully inscribed,

By their affectionate friend

And Brother,

S. ANDREWS.

ROCHFORD,
January 21, 1785.

TO THE BODY OF

PROTESTANT DISSIDENTING MINISTERS

Associated in the County of Essex

The plain Deacons

Drawn into public view by a request, entirely unexpected

Is now, very respectfully intended

By their affectionate friends

And Brethren

C. ANDREWS

ROCHFORD

January 1st, 1782

A S E R M O N, &c.

MAT. xviii. 15—18.

MOREOVER, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault, between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more; that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

THE laws of the bible, whether in the old testament or the new, are well adapted to the social nature of man. In particular, the King of Zion hath established for all his subjects, under the gospel, a social state of the purest and most excellent kind; and hath given them every

B

rule

rule which is absolutely necessary to regulate their conduct in it: And when this sacred state is duly considered in its spiritual principles, holy maxims, comfortable uses, and heavenly designs, (whereby it is distinguished from all other states on earth, that ~~ever have been or shall be~~) we may perceive the greatest propriety in its peculiar appellation, “ The kingdom of heaven.”

The chapter before us principally refers to christians in their relative capacity, and social connection; and directs them how they should conduct themselves so as to be a holy society in the Lord.—And as there must needs be a variety of dispositions in every society of christians, and many things will unavoidably arise, in their connection one with another, (through the remaining depravity of their nature) tending to give offence, and requiring the exercise of patience, forbearance, and faithfulness, in obedience to their common Lord,—therefore the words of our text are designed to instruct in the way of duty, in every such case; and they certainly fix a boundary, which ought not to be passed.

This passage is part of the Saviour's discourse to his disciples, occasioned by a *question* which they proposed to him, in these words, “ who is
“ the

“the *greatest* in the kingdom of heaven*?” Previous to the erection of this kingdom, (which took place at the exaltation of Christ to the heavenly world) the disciples had but very low and earthly conceptions of it;—supposing it was to be of the same nature, and form, with the kingdoms of this world; where some are highly dignified, by places of profit and honour; and others are totally neglected and disregarded. But the answer of Jesus entirely discouraged all such ambitious thoughts; he signified, that humility and self-denial, were essential to the character of his disciples; and plainly declared, that unless they were turned from their present pride, and made willing to undergo the reproach to which his ways might expose them, they could have no place whatever in his heavenly kingdom.—It was to enforce this doctrine upon the mind of the disciples, and to teach them, that meekness, lowliness in heart, and a quiet submission to the divine will, in all things, are the true characteristics of his people, that “Jesus called a little *child* unto him, and set him in the midst of them, “and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not “enter into the kingdom of heaven: whosoever “therefore, shall humble himself as this little “child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of

* Ver. 1.

B 2

heaven.

“ heaven: And whosoever shall receive one such lit-
 “ tle child in my name, receiveth me *.” He also
 denounced a *Wo* against any who should offend,
 or cast a stumbling-block in the way of, those
 little ones who believe in him, so as to cause them
 to fall into evil: And he especially warns every
 one of his obedient people, against all *occasions* of
 sin, arising from natural constitution, from com-
 mon employments, social connections, or what-
 ever else may become a snare to them, as ulti-
 mately tending to the judgment of eternal
 wrath. And then, in opposition to *despising* the
 meanest servant of his, and treating him with re-
 serve, neglect or revenge, in case of injuries and
 faults, (which he forbids) he calls all the saints
 to exercise *forbearance*; and to take the utmost
 pains to *gain* an offending brother, until he shall
 have manifested reigning pride, and thereby
 shewn himself unworthy of christian society and
 love. This we have in the paragraph now to be
 considered,

By the word “ moreover,” which introduceth
 our text, we are instructed, that this paragraph
 is the *continuation* of Christ’s discourse to his dis-
 ciples, against *pride*, and lording it over one ano-
 ther: and, in connection with what *immediately*
precedes, he beautifully intimates, that the con-

* Ver. 2, 3, 4, 5.

duct of Christians, towards each other, should resemble the conduct of their heavenly *Father* towards them; who does not “despise” them, in their many failings and wanderings; but has appointed his holy “Angels” to be their guardians; has sent his beloved “Son” to seek and save them; and has determined, that not one of his little ones shall finally “perish.” In like manner, all the *children* of God are enjoined to pity, forgive, and restore one another; as mentioned in the text.

Now, in order to explain the meaning, and urge the practical use, of this celebrated and very important passage, with some degree of order and freedom, I shall endeavor to take up the general *design* of it under the *three* following heads; viz. The case supposed; the process enjoined, with its issue; and the divine confirmation of that issue.

I. The *Case*, which the great Head and Lord of the church supposeth, concerning the members of it, is a case of *trespass* in one brother towards another—“if thy brother shall trespass against thee.”

Brother here, as every attentive person may perceive, is not to be taken in the largest, or in the

the

the most common acceptation—for one merely of the same nature, of the same nation, of the same neighbourhood, or of the same lineal descent;—but the term is evidently used in a *sacred* sense; for one of the same religious community, and a member of that individual society to which the parties have a direct appeal.

The whole *Jewish nation*, being all of one church, assembling at one altar, considered themselves as members one of another; and every one was bound not to suffer sin upon his *brother*, but in any wise to rebuke him in cases of offence. * The very same idea is given us of the *Christian Church*, in its distinct congregations; for an Apostle, writing to the society at *Corinth*, not to accompany with fornicators, explains himself to mean, not altogether the fornicators of this world, (for that would be like occasioning them to go out of the world) but if any that is called a *brother* be thus guilty; with such an one no not to eat; for, says he, “What have I to do to judge them also that are *without*? Do not ye judge them that are *within*? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person †.” The church of Israel had no power of discipline only over their own members; neither has the

* Lev. xix. 17. † I. Cor. v. 9—13.

church of Christ : but within that sacred enclosure, *discipline is as much a duty as worship* : and the Apostle signifies to the Corinthians, that it was their special *province* to judge and determine such cases as arose among themselves, by the rules which they had received ; while the Lord himself, in his own time and way, would judge the persons who still remained without the pale of the church.

A person belonging to such a spiritual community is the peculiar object of brotherly *love* : for while a benevolent regard is due from us to all men for *Christ's sake*, our love to the saints, particularly to the brethren, whom we have seen and acknowledged, by uniting with them in the faith and order of the Gospel, is to be shewn as to *Christ* himself ; according to that which he will say to his faithful people, at the great day of accounts ; “ inasmuch as ye have done it unto “ one of the least of these *my brethren*, ye have done “ it unto *me*.” * Yea, every fellow-member, continued by consent in the church, is always to be looked upon and treated, as one that is reconciled to God by the death of his Son ; for the charge to him that was strong in the faith, respecting a weak brother, was given in this manner : “ destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ “ died.” †

* Mat. xxv. 40.

† Rom. xiv. 15.

We

We see then, that the *brother* intended in the text, and in all similar places, is to be understood of a *brother in the Lord*; and, in particular, of a *member of the same society* with the other, against whom the trespass may be committed. They are considered as fellow-members together, agreeably to the uniform strain of the New Testament, in speaking of believers as united in *fellowship*, and directing them how to behave towards one another in that holy relation. And it should be observed also, that the word *brother*, in this connection, must include the *female*, as well as the *male*; there being no distinction of *sex* in the Christian covenant; and the privileges and duties of church relation, *as such*, being common to all the members. The whole community is pointed out by the term *brethren*; and a brother is any one of that number, whether male or female, old or young, rich or poor.

Now, though there is undoubtedly the strictest obligation upon all those who have named the name of Christ to depart from iniquity; yet it is here *supposed*, that one Christian friend and fellow-member may be guilty of trespassing against another: and the supposition is certainly true; being made by him who well knew what was in man, and with the merciful design of providing a remedy for the evils which he foresaw would arise among his people, through the

imperfection which attends them, in their very best state during the present life. But the *trespasses*, which our Lord here intends, is not what we usually call an open, gross *immorality*; no *habit* of swearing, drinking, sabbath-breaking, extortion, or uncleanness; nor even a person's being occasionally *overtaken* in sins of this kind; these not being trespasses against one member of the church more than another; but are a sinning against all, and require a different manner of treatment: for which, also, there is ample direction given in other passages; particularly in one to which we have already referred. * It is private and *personal* injury that is here designed, of which many instances will happen, among brethren who are as frequently together as christians ought to be, on account of the opposite *tempers* which prevail among them; the conceit, vanity, pride, liberality, and generosity of some; the moroseness, violence, envy, resentment, deceit, narrowness, and covetousness of others. It is almost impossible, in the present state of human nature, but that offences will in this way come: and those who are careful to observe one another's spirit, and behaviour, in the closest connections, though it be through a veil of the truest friendship, will find great exercise for their patience, meekness, and fidelity according to the rules of

* I Cor. v. 9—13.

the gospel. Something *said*, something *done*, or such an haughty *air*, tends to provoke the mind, raises a suspicion of our brother's sincerity, and is a different treatment from what we had a right to expect from him; others perhaps have received a very unfavourable opinion of us, through his strange report, or misrepresentation; and we are extremely *hurt*, and mortified. "Had it been an *enemy* that reproached me," says the aggrieved brother, "then could I have borne it; but it was *thou*, mine equal, my acquaintance, with whom I have taken sweet counsel, and we walked in company to the house of God. —Ah! how hath he wrested my *words*, from their obvious design;—What an unfair construction did he put upon my *conduct*, in a matter that was clearly well intended;—How unkind was the intimation which he gave to my *neighbour*, respecting my integrity;—What a material injury hath he done to my *credit*, by his unjust account of my circumstances;—On such an occasion, how did he expose me to *ridicule*, before a number of strangers;—How much did he undervalue my *knowledge*, in comparison with his own;—How did he lessen my *character*, that his might appear to greater advantage;—How *rudely* did he behave to me, though I was justly his superior in life, under pretence of the equality of christians;—In what an *equivocal* manner did he reply to my question,

when

when I depended upon the real truth from his mouth;—What *deceit* did he practise with me, in a case which required absolute uprightness;—How did he *impose* upon my ignorance, and confidence, in my common dealings with him;—How did he fly into a *passion* with me, for no just provocation of which I was conscious;—What *power* did he assume over me, because he was in better outward circumstances than myself;—In what contempt did he speak of me, because I was poor;—What *freedom* did he take with me, because I was young;—With what *rigour* did he use me, because I was his dependant;—And what *distance*, and *pride*, did he manifest towards me, as if he was perfectly ashamed of my acquaintance!”——

These are some of the *complaints*, which one christian brother may have to alledge against another, under the head of personal trespasses: others of like nature will easily occur to your thoughts; and it is too probable that many things of the kind have often been realized in your seporate assemblies.

Now, when things of this nature turn up in any christian society, those members, who are particularly concerned in them, can have no comfortable fellowship together in the ordinances

nances of the gospel, till they have settled their differences agreeable to its *rules*. Passing over in *silence* any real offence, will leave upon the mind, of the conscious parties, a very hurtful sensation; and, most probably, will pave the way to an open rupture, sooner or later. There ought to be an *immediate explanation*; that acknowledgement may be made on the one side, and forgiveness declared on the other, (if the case should require it;) this alone can restore their mutual happiness in each other. And how can they join in asking forgiveness of their heavenly father, unless they forgive every one his brother their trespasses? How can they unite in shewing forth the Lord's death, as their common ground of hope, and as expressive of their joyful expectation of his second coming, while they are not heartily loving one another for his sake, and as joint members of his body the church? "Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." So taught the blessed Jesus in another place, when also he was speaking on the subject of *brotherly love* among his disciples.* And this brings us to the consideration of the *method*, which

* Mat. v. 23, 24.

is appointed in our text, to be used, in the case of personal trespasss, according to our *second* proposal.

II. After the supposed case of a trespasss, by one brother against another, (which we have endeavoured to explain and exemplify,) this remarkable *process* is enjoined with a declaration of its issue—"Go and tell him his fault, between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he shall not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more; that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

This salutary council of our Lord consists of *three parts*, to be attended to in their order, (if the matter so require) and is intermixed with a distinct account of the issue of the process.

"Go and tell him his fault, between thee and him alone." This is the first step to be taken in the case, and is certainly the most difficult, by being the first; for when once we have entered upon this necessary course, we shall find our way to be easier every step we take. The great mat-

ter

ter is to bring the parties properly together. How common is it, upon a personal offence, for the parties to be shy of each other, to harbour private resentments, or to carry it with an high hand, and be ready to say, "Let him come to *me*; *he* is the aggressor, not I."—Such, indeed, is the spirit of the world; but the Lord will have his people to be otherwise minded; *go to him*, saith Jesus: and certainly they who are truly subject to his authority, having tasted that he is gracious, will not hesitate to comply with this injunction. Indeed there should be a mutual concern in the parties, to be reconciled, and such an eager desire to have a friendly interview, that neither of them should stand for the other's going first; but according to a fore-cited passage, he that has *given* the offence, when he remembers before God that his brother hath ought against him, should readily apply to him for forgiveness, or according to the text, he that has *received* the offence, should speedily try to gain the offender.

It is this reciprocal *forwardness* to be reconciled which is wanting, in most cases of difference: And did but christians see that importance in it, which is pointed out by our Lord, they would never withdraw themselves from ordinances in the church because some one hath offended them, would never approach to those sacred institutions,

with an evil heart against a fellow member, would have no dread of discharging a duty which hath such a warrant; by no means would they suffer sin to remain upon their offending brother, nor wait for his first coming to them as being the aggressor, but would embrace the earliest opportunity of *going to him* on the occasion. The master should not be *above* doing this to the servant, nor the rich to the poor, if they are both in fellowship together; neither should the meanest member of the society be *afraid* to do it to the most noble, when the case requires it to be done; but should consider, that the one lawgiver in the church, is more to be regarded than all the masters on earth, and can amply recompence for any temporal loss which may be sustained, through fidelity to him; and, methinks, they who pay a proper deference to his supreme authority, be they who they may, will very soon surmount their own diffidence and difficulties.

But let it be always apparent to the mind and conscience of your offending brother, that, in going to him, you are not influenced by an unsuitable temper; by wrath, revenge, pride, or covetousness. A meek and quiet spirit should ever accompany you, a sense of your own liability to fall, a greater concern for the sin of your brother, than for the injury which you have received
by

his conduct, and a hearty desire to have all ground of difference between you and him entirely removed.

In such a temper as this, “Go and tell him his fault.” Never whisper it to others; but directly and faithfully, lay the charge before himself. Let him know wherein, you apprehend, he has transgressed the christian law of love in your case. Labour to convince him of his crime by a statement, not of idle reports, but, of real facts. And call upon him with great solemnity, and christian affection, to repent of the sin into which he hath unhappily fallen.

But do not forget, that profound *secrecy* is required, in this stage of the business; it must be transacted, “between thee and him alone;” that there be no occasion given for pride on your part, nor for scandal on his; and hoping that the matter may terminate with this private interview, to the perfect satisfaction of both parties; in which case, none besides will know any thing of the duty which the one has performed, or of the acknowledgment, which the other has made.

Here we may notice the event or *issue* of this first and very important step, in the treatment of an offending brother, “if he shall hear thee, thou
“hast

"hast gained thy brother." He may, perhaps, be able to point out some *mistake* in the case, which will go far towards removing the offence. Or should it be wholly true, he may, indeed, for the first moment, through the depravity of human nature, feel himself not a little discomposed at the charge, and be almost unable to maintain a friendly temper; but a serious recollection on his part, and great forbearance on yours, may soon calm his mind, and lead him to see the impropriety of his own conduct, and the propriety of yours, in being so faithful to him; and he will be ready to say to himself, in the language of the pious psalmist, "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil which shall not break my head*." Accordingly, he will not fail instantly to *acknowledge* his fault, with shame and godly sorrow; praying to be kept from any such evil in future:—Thus you have *gained* your brother: you have gained him to the obedience of that truth from which he had occasionally deviated; and you have gained him afresh to the exercise of mutual love. Of consequence, it belongs to you to declare yourself entirely *satisfied*; and that it is your resolution to be as comfortable, in your fellowship with him, as if nothing of the kind had happened.

* Psal. cxli. 5.

It may be proper, in this place, to advert a little to some other similar passages: see, in particular, the question which Peter, put on this very occasion, and the answer of Jesus to it*; “Then
 “came Peter to him and said; Lord, how oft
 “shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive
 “him, till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I
 “say not unto thee, until seven times; but until
 “seventy times seven!” See, also, the remarkable instruction which our Lord gave to his disciples, upon the subject of offences, in another passage,†
 “Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him: and if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in
 “a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent;
 “thou shalt forgive him.”—How clearly may we perceive, from these passages, what offences, what trespasses, are intended? they must be those, and only those, which arise from the different natural *dispositions* of the professed disciples of Christ; the conceit, envy, pride, and jarring interests, and inclinations, which are found among them. And there are some persons of such strange, such ungovernable tempers, that when we live in the same house together, or are otherwise closely connected with them, they will offend us *many* times in a day. Yet they may soon see into their error;

* Verses, 21, 22.

† Luke xvii. 3, 4.

and either of their own accord, or upon our private admonition, may readily declare their repentance; which, by the rule of our divine master, is entitled to our forgiveness, as often as it appears to be heartily declared.

Thus there is great call for the exercise of patience, long-suffering, and mercy, in all those who walk together in christian fellowship, and as heirs together of the grace of life;—even as every child of God hath absolute need of the same from his heavenly father. And it is to be remembered, that if we forgive men their trespasses, in such cases as these, our heavenly father will also forgive us; but if we do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will our father forgive our trespasses*. The weight of which consideration I earnestly wish we may all thoroughly feel!

But to return to the words of the text—your brother may *not* be gained by your private admonition; he may prove angry and obstinate; yea perhaps, he may add sin to sin, by scorning your reproof, and retorting upon your conduct; especially if he be your superior in a civil station of life. And, in this case, you had need be doubly on your guard, that you do not return

* Matt. vi. 14, 15.

railing for railing, nor suffer any provocation to get the better of your judgement. If he have no charge which he can justly fix upon you, nor any power to ruffle your temper, you have much the advantage over him. Be always sure, therefore, that there is no *beam* in your own eye, when you attempt to draw the *mote* from your brother's; and take care to be well prepared for the business, by means of serious consideration, and fervent prayer.

And should you, after all, have the mortification to be *unsuccessful* in your first interview, how are you further to act? Must you intirely give up the cause? suffering this sin to remain upon your brother, and yourself to live in a comfortless state of mind towards him?—By no means! for his sake, for your own sake, for the church's sake, and for the Lord's sake, this must not be. You are, in obedience to your rule, to *go again*; but accompanied now by proper witnesses—"If he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."

This *one or two more* must, in all reason, be members of the *same society* with yourselves; and they should be persons in whose judgement, and temper, you can confide. You now make them,
and

and them only at present, acquainted with the whole affair; with the matter, time, circumstances of the trespass; every thing, in short, which relates to it; together with the ill success of your private visit; that they may know exactly how to judge of the case. And, in great measure, you leave the management of it, this time, to them; only acquainting your offending brother with the reason of your coming thus, and asking him whether he be now disposed to acknowledge the evil with which he was before charged.

These brethren, if they be wise, will shew great tenderness, great impartiality, great faithfulness, and solemnity of mind; endeavouring by all means to fasten conviction upon the offender's conscience, and to bring him to an open contrition for his fault: And they are particularly to act as *witnesses*, that the matter may not rest merely upon accusation on the one side, and denial on the other; that it may not be only an altercation between the parties, and that, if there should be a necessity to lay the case before the church, these persons may bear *testimony* to what has passed; and support the charge by the proofs which have turned up in their presence.

And doubtless, if this second step, by the interference of the witnesses, should be attended

with the desired effect, in bringing the offender to a proper acknowledgment of his error; the issue must be forgiveness, and reconciliation between the parties; the same as if repentance had been manifested at the first interview.

But should this step, also, prove abortive, should the party offending *pass over with indifference* the admonition of these brethren, and shew himself altogether averse to reconciliation; the only further step which remains to be taken in this unhappy case, is to bring it before the church: "If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church."

There is no room to ask here, what church is intended, Common sense, the drift of the passage, and the whole strain of the new Testament, all concur to lead our thoughts to a *particular* society of worshipping christians, who have the power of government entirely within themselves, by having the whole law of Christ among them. It is that society, to which the parties in question both belong, as members, and where the aggrieved person may have immediate redress,

This society is now to be apprised of the affair in dispute; which has at length, through the refractory temper of the offending brother, become

of

of a very serious nature, however trivial it might seem at the first: for his present disposition appears quite unsuitable for a church member; and it is impossible for those who are privy to it, to regard him as a meek disciple of Christ. By the elder or elders, therefore, (well informed of the state of the case,) it is regularly brought before the convened assembly, that they may judge and determine upon it, as the case may require; taking side with the offended, and censuring the offender, for his trespass and obstinacy. And here the one or two witnesses are of material use, in substantiating the charge, in corroborating the account of the steps which have been taken to reclaim the offender, and in making report of his words and behaviour on the occasion. The whole transaction is to be managed with the deepest *solemnity*. After earnest prayer to the Lord, and clear references to his word, suited to the case, the culpable person should be charged with the crime; publicly admonished by the suffrages of the people, and pathetically called to repentance.

If he shall then humble himself, and declare his unfeigned sorrow for the trespass against his brother, and for the grief which he hath occasioned to the rest of his brethren, in thus sinning against

against God, the censure of the church hath had the desired effect, and the parties are mutually reconciled.

“ But if he neglect to hear the church,” so as to disregard its merciful, faithful, awful admonition; and still to refuse an acknowledgement, for a trespass which is clearly proved against him, we see the dreadful *consequence*: it is not suspension; not a temporary privation from solemn ordinances; not postponement for a second admonition of the church; no, those things have no relation to the case in hand: but it is an immediate *exclusion* from membership in that society: for thus saith the Lord, “ Let him be unto thee as “ an heathen man and a publican;—that is, as one from whom thou art discharged from all christian fellowship; and whom thou mayest look upon, for the reigning pride which he has discovered, as one who ought to be driven from sacred society with disgrace; just as the Jews were wont to look upon an idolatrous Pagan, or an oppressive collector of the taxes. Not indeed that you should, on any account, attempt to hurt or hinder the *temporal* interest, of him, that is put from among you; as the Jews are said to have done towards the Pagans and publicans; no, nor should you refuse him any advice which may tend to his *spiritual* benefit. But as he is justly

justly excluded from your holy communion, by a perseverance in sin; he is no longer entitled to the offices of your brotherly love for the truth's sake: he is now to be considered as of the world, and in the kingdom of satan. And in this deplorable situation he must abide, till he be called into eternity, to give account of himself to God the judge of all; unless this awful sentence of excommunication should, at length, operate for his repentance, and recovery to his station in the church, which is the true design of it.

III. The only thing which now remains to be considered, is, the divine *confirmation* of the issue, of the foregoing process; or in other words, the solemn ratification by the Lord, of the regular deeds of his people.—“ Verily I say unto you, “ whatsoever you shall bind on earth, shall be “ bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall “ loose on earth, shall be loosed in Heaven.”

This is great language, befitting the mouth which speaks it, and tending to strike every conscience with awe, as well as to encourage the churches of the saints, in the constant exercise of christian discipline. It is addressed by the great Head of the Church, to any society of his people, whose religious conduct is conformable to the rules of his word. And it is strictly

E

connected

connected with the method prescribed for the treatment of an offending brother; yea, it contains the highest sanction which can be given to that method; it is, as it were, the broad seal of Heaven affixed to it.

Now, the change of *number*, which we see in this verse, from the singular to the plural, may be designed to teach us, that when the matter of a private trespass comes to the issue which hath been declared, it then concerns the whole society, as well as the first agrieved person; and that not only is the *injured brother* to treat the offender as a heathen man and a publican, but that *all the members* of the church are to do the same; that offender being now cast out from among them, as a religious body, into the territories of Satan, "For the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." *

The punishment here inflicted by the many, the church, is called *binding*, because it binds the crime upon the offender as an impenitent person. And their taking off this awful censure, upon the profession of repentance, is stiled *loosing*, as it gives the restored brother all the privileges of the church, which he before enjoyed; and he is now

* I Cor. v. 5.

in
ay
of
th
to-
nd
of-
at
e;
ng
of
he
rd
ny,
he
on.
the
it
the
ow
no

in
ay
of
th
to-
nd
of-
at
e;
ng
of
he
rd
ny,
he
on.
the
it
the
ow
no

in
ay
of
th
to-
nd
of-
at
e;
ng
of
he
rd
ny,
he
on.
the
it
the
ow
no

therefore, by way of *close* to the discourse, beg leave to suggest, to the consideration of all persons who have paid any serious attention to it; the following brief *inferences, and reflections*.

I. Little as this passage may be thought to speak to the *world*, it certainly *implies* a great deal of awful matter; that the world is not the object of the divine favour, that it lieth in wickedness, is the kingdom of Satan, and devoted to destruction; it is composed of the ungodly; it breathes a spirit of hostility against God; and the refractory from among the saints, are cast into it. Are any of you then *of the world*?—remaining in unbelief—dead in trespasses and sins—children of disobedience—serving diverse lusts and pleasures—and rejected by all holy beings?—Consider well your case!—What objects of pity you are, and how dreadfully dangerous is your state; and while there is yet room, cry to Heaven for mercy; hearken to the voice which says, “Awake
“ thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and
“ Christ shall give you light;” * and beg for the good spirit of our God, to guide your feet into the way of peace.

II. Loud as the cry has been about the *church*, some saying,—Lo! it is here,—others Lo! it is

* Eph. v. 14.

there:

there: one description being of this sort, and another of that; the passage before us, methinks, may serve to establish *our* minds in the *congregational* form of it: for what other form can properly answer to the case, of one christian brother relating another's trespass to the church, and finding immediate redress? Certainly none of those in which worship and discipline are widely separated from each other, as in the diocesan church. But the church considered under the notion of a single congregation, like the church of *Corinth*, for instance; where all the members came together into *one place* to worship; and where the power of receiving, admonishing, and rejecting was independently lodged; as might easily be made appear, from the apostolical epistles to that church; such a church, directly suits the case we have been speaking of, and must to all intents and purposes, be the true visible church of Christ on earth: it is a congregation of faithful people, separated from the errors of the world, united in the truth as it is in Jesus, and worshipping and walking together as his law directs, calling no man master but him. And to every such church we are heartily disposed to say, "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity in thy palaces." *

* Psal. cxxii. 7.

III. The

III. The *use of Christian fellowship* is apparent from this subject. Christian fellowship gives a permanent support to the gospel in any place; it manifests the honours of Christ there; it is a striking warning to the world around, like Noah's building the ark; it is an open invitation to the distressed, a constant relief to the godly, and the seat of divine ordinances and laws; where the justice and the mercy of the Lord are eminently manifested, and where edification and admonition are regularly administered; and each one may justly say of this sacred establishment, in those well known words,

“ There my best friends, my kindred dwell,
 “ There God my saviour reigns.”—WATTS.

IV. *How amiable would any Christian society appear,* did but all the members of it act in character, and live in the regular exercise of brotherly love to one another, for the truth's sake which dwelleth in them!—Prejudices would be laid aside; the infirmities of human nature would be in a great measure overcome; the minds of the people would be open to each other with the greatest freedom; a peculiar *cordiality* would reign among them; they would prefer the company of one another to that of all the world; they would place the utmost confidence in each other's integrity; they would always aim to serve one another

another in love; to instruct those that are ignorant, to humble those that are proud, to warn those that are unruly, to succour those that are oppressed, to relieve such as want, to comfort such as mourn, to weep with them who weep, and rejoice with them who rejoice, Yea, to fulfill the law of Christ, in bearing one another's burdens: In a word, they would "Stand fast
 "in one spirit, with one mind be striving together for the faith of the gospel, and in
 "nothing terrified by their adversaries;"* who would, in this case, be ready to exclaim, as of old, "see how these Christians love one another!"

V. *The decline of church relation*, which is so evident in most places, may perhaps be ascribed, in no small degree, to a neglect of the excellent rule, which our text contains. Scarcely one person in ten, even of those who call themselves protestant dissenters, in any place, is seen to make an open profession of subjection to the authority of Christ. They content themselves with seeing and hearing, without taking any active part in the fellowship of the saints. And, by the way, because they have not given up themselves to walk in the ordinances of the Lord with his people, the brethren of the church are by no means accountable for their conduct:

* Phil. i. 27—28.

and

and any miscarriages which may be found among them, ought not to be imputed to the dissenting interest; though it is too often done, by the undiscerning multitude. Yea, respecting all such outstanding professors, it is with propriety said, “ Whatever *secretly* they may be, they are *apparently* in the kingdom of Satan, the God of this world.” * A situation in which, I am persuaded, many would dread to be found, did they rightly consider it! But the customary neglect of fellowship, which so much prevails among us, greatly blunts the edge of conviction: And I say, this neglect may not improbably be owing, in no small degree, to the neglect of the rule, which our Lord hath here so particularly laid down, for his disciples to walk by. The neglect of this rule gives a society, at once, a worldly cast; or makes it look like a society of this world, where the *passions* have a predominate sway; it has the appearance of an uncultivated field, instead of resembling a well-managed garden. And when the members of a church are known to speak evil one of another, to discover envy, resentment, selfishness and pride, to bite and devour each other, how natural is it to say, “ What do ye more than others;† The most irreligious will be apt to cast this reflection upon them: And, indeed, where things of this kind are suffer-

* Case's Sermons on Primitive Christianity, &c. page 212.

† Mat. v. 47.

ed in a church, the spirit of the gospel is lost; and there is nothing important, no firmness in such fellowship to make it lasting, or to strike the consciences of by-standers; the ways of the world are not condemned by it, and serious minds are ~~really~~ discouraged from uniting in it. Keep close to your rule, Christians, and you may hope to see it otherwise: a check will be given to the ungodly, and encouragement to humble enquirers; and an antient prophecy may have its most spiritual accomplishment.—“ in these days it shall come to pass saith the Lord, that ~~the~~ men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, we will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.” *

VI. The *discipline* of the Lord's House is a most *serious business*; calculated to promote holiness in a spirit of meekness and fear. To be received, admonished, acquitted, or excommunicated by a Christian church, according to the rules of the divine word, is no trivial matter; nor can it be ridiculed or contemned at a cheap rate: Heaven ratifies and confirms transactions of this nature; and they may well reach the consciences of all who are acquainted with them.—When church government is regularly maintained, without partiality, or preferring one before another, hy-

* Zeck. viii. 23.

pœrites are thereby kept at a distance; and caution is given to those who think they stand, lest by any means they should fall. How, in particular, are the solemnities of the *last day* impressed upon the mind, when the refractory are justly excluded from the christian brotherhood. Those who are put away, may thus, by the blessing of God, be brought to repentance, or else be led to expect an everlasting separation from the saints; and those who remain in the church may be moved with holy fear; as it was said of the discipline in old time,—“ All the people shall
 “ hear, and fear, and do no more presumptu-
 “ ously !”*

Finally, therefore, it should, upon the whole, be the concern, and endeavour, of all the faithful in Christ Jesus, to *walk* in this good but narrow way of the Lord. They are certainly under the strictest obligation so to do; nor can they fulfill their engagements to the Lord without it.—Let *Pastors*, then, go before the flock, directing, perswading, and setting them an example, in this self-denying obedience of the gospel; and let the flock of God be readily guided by their faithful pastors; “ For they watch for
 “ your souls, as they that must give account,
 “ that they may do it with joy, and not with

* Deut. xvii. 13.

“ grief;

"grief; for that is unprofitable for you" * Have either been deficient heretofore? O, let it not be so in future, but let the *whole brotherhood* cordially agree in this, that there can be no true peace, no lasting prosperity, no comfortable communion, no proper strength, no important usefulness, in any Christian society, without a due regard to the *rule* which hath been recommended. And I heartily pray that the good spirit of God may write this rule upon all our hearts!

A M E N !

* Heb. xiii. 17.

F I N I S



The Monthly Review for August, 1798
gives the following account of this Sermon.
A plain, but sensible & well-arranged dis-
course - The Discipline recommended & en-
forced in it is of the strict Independent sort.
Every Society of Christians constitutes a church; &
Church hath within itself the power of y^e keys.
The members y^t compose it have a right, inde-
pendent of all other Societies, & of all
human authority, to exercise y^t discipline
whenever they judge to be consistent wth the
Divine rule".

"We really think Mr. Andrews hath as much
right to the keys as the Pope: but when both
this holiness talk of opening & shutting y^e gates
of heaven, we smile at their presumption, &
rejoice y^t those gates are committed to y^e care
of better hands; for, let the Pope and Mr. A.
Andrews say what they will, heaven doth not
obey their decisions, nor wait their or-
ders, either to "bind" or "loose" the Soulds in
Heavenly Goodness hath created".